

Of "Kampung Boy," "Tok Guru" and Other Zany Characters: Cartooning In Malaysia

by

John A. Lent

*School of Journalism and Theatre
Temple University, Philadelphia*

A popular culture artifact that has matured almost full term in Malaysia during the past generation is comic art (1). The growth is rather phenomenal as the country now sports famous cartoon characters that attempt to reflect the multi-faceted culture, comics specialty stores, native comic strips, and occasional comic art exhibitions.

Comic art goes back a number of years in Malaysia, but what is different is the magnitude of recognition afforded the genre since the late 1970s. This essay attempts to account for the growing popularity of cartooning by looking at catalysts, historical traditions, trends, and problems.

Major Influences

When Creative Enterprises started the humour magazine, *Gila-Gila* in 1978, it unleashed a flurry of creativity in comic art. Other humour periodicals sprouted regularly, most imitative of *Gila-Gila* and all important outlets for heretofore audience-starved cartoonists. Among early magazines were *Gelihati* (1978), *Batu Api* (1984), *Komedi* (1985), and *Warta Jenaka* (1987); others included *Toyol*, *Humor*, *Telatah*, *Flipside*, *Geli Geli*, *Relek*, *Gelagat*, *Jenakarama*, and *Mat Jenin* (Mulyadi, 1990:8).

By 1990, when the humour magazine market showed signs of being saturated, publishers reacted in different ways. Black and Brown Publications, publishers of *Telatah*, decided to issue an English-language magazine, *Flipside*, to garner that market for the predominantly Malay humour writers, while Creative Enterprise converted its *Humor* magazine to all silent cartoons to bridge the language-bound audiences. Other magazines folded, an inevitable consequence of too many magazines with the identical concept (Interview, Zunar, 1993). By 1990, Creative Masters shut down after the demise of its *Warta Jenaka* and *Komedi* and the sale of its *Batu Api* to Kumpulan Karangraf. *Toyol* ceased publication in 1987.

The four remaining humour magazines in 1993 were *Gila-Gila*, *Gelihati*, *Gelagat*, and *Jenakarama*. Together, they hired a total of 50 car-

Of "Kampung Boy," "Tok Guru" and Other Zany Characters: Cartooning In Malaysia

by

John A. Lent

*School of Journalism and Theatre
Temple University, Philadelphia*

A popular culture artifact that has matured almost full term in Malaysia during the past generation is comic art (1). The growth is rather phenomenal as the country now sports famous cartoon characters that attempt to reflect the multi-faceted culture, comics specialty stores, native comic strips, and occasional comic art exhibitions.

Comic art goes back a number of years in Malaysia, but what is different is the magnitude of recognition afforded the genre since the late 1970s. This essay attempts to account for the growing popularity of cartooning by looking at catalysts, historical traditions, trends, and problems.

Major Influences

When Creative Enterprises started the humour magazine, *Gila-Gila* in 1978, it unleashed a flurry of creativity in comic art. Other humour periodicals sprouted regularly, most imitative of *Gila-Gila* and all important outlets for heretofore audience-starved cartoonists. Among early magazines were *Gelihati* (1978), *Batu Api* (1984), *Komedi* (1985), and *Warta Jenaka* (1987); others included *Toyol*, *Humor*, *Telatah*, *Flipside*, *Geli Geli*, *Relek*, *Gelagat*, *Jenakarama*, and *Mat Jenin* (Mulyadi, 1990:8).

By 1990, when the humour magazine market showed signs of being saturated, publishers reacted in different ways. Black and Brown Publications, publishers of *Telatah*, decided to issue an English-language magazine, *Flipside*, to garner that market for the predominantly Malay humour writers, while Creative Enterprise converted its *Humor* magazine to all silent cartoons to bridge the language-bound audiences. Other magazines folded, an inevitable consequence of too many magazines with the identical concept (Interview, Zunar, 1993). By 1990, Creative Masters shut down after the demise of its *Warta Jenaka* and *Komedi* and the sale of its *Batu Api* to Kumpulan Karangraf. *Toyol* ceased publication in 1987.

The four remaining humour magazines in 1993 were *Gila-Gila*, *Gelihati*, *Gelagat*, and *Jenakarama*. Together, they hired a total of 50 car-

toonists on a fulltime basis and 100 freelancers (Interview, Zunar, 1993). Besides providing work for cartoonists, the magazines obviously gave pleasure to their readers, judging from their huge circulations and expansive corporate structures. *Gila-Gila* has had a circulation as high as 150,000, second in the country to the women's magazine, *Wanita*. *Gila-Gila* personnel have pointed out that *Wanita* appears only monthly, while *Gila-Gila* maintains its impressive circulation twice a month. *Gelihat* is part of Kumpulan Karangraf, third largest Malaysian publisher after New Straits Times and Utusan, with 16 magazines and tabloids, a printing company and bindery (Interview, Az, 1993). Kumpulan Karangraf is owned by Hishamuddin Haji Yaakub.

Malaysian humour magazines are rather bulky with 72 to 82 pages, including the works of dozens of artists, usually in one-page spreads. They are reasonably priced at two ringgits (for more on humor magazines, see Provencher, 1990, 1995).

A second major influence upon Malaysian cartooning was the dedicated efforts of some individuals who either started these magazines or otherwise advanced the profession. Although a number of people played a role in the development of comic art, five are singled out here: Rejab Had, Mishar (Sariman Mior Hasan), Lat (Mohd. Nor Khalid), Zunar (Zulkifli Annuar Al Haq), and Mulyadi Mahamood.

Considered the oldtimer among cartoonists, Rejab Had has figured in many comic art firsts. In 1973, he helped start PERPEKSI (Persatuan Pelukis Komik Kartun and Ilustrasi—Association of Comic, Cartoon, and Illustration Artists), which had as its goals to: 1. promote better wages and working conditions for cartoonists, 2. set up a professional context, 3. develop branch organizations in various states, 4. publish a periodical. The members could not agree on suitable wages and working conditions because of their very different situations, and PERPEKSI folded, but not before Rejab Had almost single-handedly brought out the organization's magazine, *Ha Hu Hum*, in 1973. Rejab resigned after the fourth issue, disagreeing with the publisher, Suarasa, which did not believe humor magazines were appropriate for adults (Provencher, 1995). *Ha Hu Hum* only lasted one or two issues after that.

In 1983, Rejab Had was involved in setting up what he and others called the first comics exhibition (2) in Malaysia, "Kartun '83" at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Eighteen cartoonists were featured, including Rejab Had, Lat, and Jaafar Taib. Four years later, Rejab began teaching a *Gila-Gila* cartoon class to 14 students; he has also written a book on cartooning skills (Provencher, forthcoming).

Rejab's own cartooning career goes back to his army days. He recalled how, at the beginning in 1956, he was paid with two movie admissions for the ten cartoons he "sold" (Rifas, 1984: 97).

While working as a writer and artist for Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (3) in 1976, Mishar (Sariman Mior Hasan) pulled together five cartoonists

toonists on a fulltime basis and 100 freelancers (Interview, Zunar, 1993). Besides providing work for cartoonists, the magazines obviously gave pleasure to their readers, judging from their huge circulations and expansive corporate structures. *Gila-Gila* has had a circulation as high as 150,000, second in the country to the women's magazine, *Wanita*. *Gila-Gila* personnel have pointed out that *Wanita* appears only monthly, while *Gila-Gila* maintains its impressive circulation twice a month. *Gelihat* is part of Kumpulan Karangraf, third largest Malaysian publisher after New Straits Times and Utusan, with 16 magazines and tabloids, a printing company and bindery (Interview, Az, 1993). Kumpulan Karangraf is owned by Hishamuddin Haji Yaakub.

Malaysian humour magazines are rather bulky with 72 to 82 pages, including the works of dozens of artists, usually in one-page spreads. They are reasonably priced at two ringgits (for more on humor magazines, see Provencher, 1990, 1995).

A second major influence upon Malaysian cartooning was the dedicated efforts of some individuals who either started these magazines or otherwise advanced the profession. Although a number of people played a role in the development of comic art, five are singled out here: Rejab Had, Mishar (Sariman Mior Hasan), Lat (Mohd. Nor Khalid), Zunar (Zulkifli Annuar Al Haq), and Mulyadi Mahamood.

Considered the oldtimer among cartoonists, Rejab Had has figured in many comic art firsts. In 1973, he helped start PERPEKSI (Persatuan Pelukis Komik Kartun and Ilustrasi—Association of Comic, Cartoon, and Illustration Artists), which had as its goals to: 1. promote better wages and working conditions for cartoonists, 2. set up a professional context, 3. develop branch organizations in various states, 4. publish a periodical. The members could not agree on suitable wages and working conditions because of their very different situations, and PERPEKSI folded, but not before Rejab Had almost single-handedly brought out the organization's magazine, *Ha Hu Hum*, in 1973. Rejab resigned after the fourth issue, disagreeing with the publisher, Suarasa, which did not believe humor magazines were appropriate for adults (Provencher, 1995). *Ha Hu Hum* only lasted one or two issues after that.

In 1983, Rejab Had was involved in setting up what he and others called the first comics exhibition (2) in Malaysia, "Kartun '83" at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Eighteen cartoonists were featured, including Rejab Had, Lat, and Jaafar Taib. Four years later, Rejab began teaching a *Gila-Gila* cartoon class to 14 students; he has also written a book on cartooning skills (Provencher, forthcoming).

Rejab's own cartooning career goes back to his army days. He recalled how, at the beginning in 1956, he was paid with two movie admissions for the ten cartoons he "sold" (Rifas, 1984: 97).

While working as a writer and artist for Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (3) in 1976, Mishar (Sariman Mior Hasan) pulled together five cartoonists

who had been involved with PERPEKSI or *Ha Hu Hum* to establish a humour magazine company. By having their own company, Creative Enterprise, they controlled content and format so that there would not be a repeat of the *Ha Hu Hum*-Suarasa problems. For the first two years, Creative Enterprise published other types of magazines with secure markets (children's magazines and Malay hero/heroine comics), but on April 1, 1978, the company ventured into humour magazines with *Gila-Gila*, an imitator of *Mad* that sold out its first number of 10,000 copies in a week.

Mishar, either because of boredom or an argument with his partners (both reasons are given), left Creative Enterprise to pursue other business interests. But, in 1984 he returned to humour periodicals, founding Creative Masters, publishers of *Batu Api* and eventually *Komedi* (1985) and *Warta Jenaka* (1987) (Provencher, 1995).

The third individual to leave a profound impact upon the profession did so through his personal achievements. Lat (Mohd. Nor Khalid) has served as an inspiration for all those who aspire to be cartoonists. He has made a comfortable living by merchandising (4) and commercializing his work, at the same time, according to art critic Redza Piyadasa, he has elevated cartooning to the level of "high visual arts" through his social commentary and "construction of the landscape" (Krishen Jir, 1989). His efforts were rewarded recently when the honorific title of "datuk" was conferred upon him. His advertising cartoons have been done for many clients, including Whittle in the U.S. and McDonald's in Malaysia. The latter developed a "Kampung Burger" (Chicken, lettuce, pineapple, bun), named after Lat's "Kampung Boy."

Lat has had a long career, starting with his first publication at 13 years of age. According to him:

"At the age of 13, I sent my drawings into a firm in Penang and they thought I was an adult because the way they replied: "Tuan, we have received your comic book, and as a trial, we are willing to use it, and we can pay \$25 for it."

Deciding that he and others in Malaysia were tired of gangster and warrior comics, Lat had made this first effort a funny story (Interview, Lat, 1986; see published version, Lent, 1987). At 17, he started drawing "Si Mamat" on a weekly basis for *Berita Minggu*; a year later, he began four years as a crime reporter for the *Straits Times*. By 1974, he had decided he wanted to be a fulltime cartoonist, and a decade later, he left the *New Straits Times* to set up his own Kampung Boy Sendirian Bhd. He continues to draw "Scenes of Malaysian Life" editorial cartoons thrice weekly for the *New Straits Times* and "Si Mamat" for *Berita Minggu*. Additionally, he has published numerous book collections of his work, notably on *kampung life*, and has made an animated cartoon of "Kampung Boy."

who had been involved with PERPEKSI or *Ha Hu Hum* to establish a humour magazine company. By having their own company, Creative Enterprise, they controlled content and format so that there would not be a repeat of the *Ha Hu Hum*-Suarasa problems. For the first two years, Creative Enterprise published other types of magazines with secure markets (children's magazines and Malay hero/heroine comics), but on April 1, 1978, the company ventured into humour magazines with *Gila-Gila*, an imitator of *Mad* that sold out its first number of 10,000 copies in a week.

Mishar, either because of boredom or an argument with his partners (both reasons are given), left Creative Enterprise to pursue other business interests. But, in 1984 he returned to humour periodicals, founding Creative Masters, publishers of *Batu Api* and eventually *Komedi* (1985) and *Warta Jenaka* (1987) (Provencher, 1995).

The third individual to leave a profound impact upon the profession did so through his personal achievements. Lat (Mohd. Nor Khalid) has served as an inspiration for all those who aspire to be cartoonists. He has made a comfortable living by merchandising (4) and commercializing his work, at the same time, according to art critic Redza Piyadasa, he has elevated cartooning to the level of "high visual arts" through his social commentary and "construction of the landscape" (Krishen Jir, 1989). His efforts were rewarded recently when the honorific title of "datuk" was conferred upon him. his advertising cartoons have been done for many clients, including Whittle in the U.S. and McDonald's in Malaysia. The latter developed a "Kampung Burger" (Chicken, lettuce, pineapple, bun), named after Lat's "Kampung Boy."

Lat has had a long career, starting with his first publication at 13 years of age. According to him:

"At the age of 13, I sent my drawings into a firm in Penang and they thought I was an adult because the way they replied: "Tuan, we have received your comic book, and as a trial, we are willing to use it, and we can pay \$25 for it."

Deciding that he and others in Malaysia were tired of gangster and warrior comics, Lat had made this first effort a funny story (Interview, Lat, 1986; see published version, Lent, 1987). At 17, he started drawing "Si Mamat" on a weekly basis for *Berita Minggu*; a year later, he began four years as a crime reporter for the *Straits Times*. By 1974, he had decided he wanted to be a fulltime cartoonist, and a decade later, he left the *New Straits Times* to set up his own Kampung Boy Sendirian Bhd. He continues to draw "Scenes of Malaysian Life" editorial cartoons thrice weekly for the *New Straits Times* and "Si Mamat" for *Berita Minggu*. Additionally, he has published numerous book collections of his work, notably on *kampung life*, and has made an animated cartoon of "Kampung Boy."

In all this work, Lat makes social comments on Malaysia, ranging from "village life as seen through a young boy's eyes, to national politics, as observed by an irreverent bystander" (Suhaini Aznam, 1989: 42). He insists he is apolitical although "Scenes of Malaysian Life" has exposed Israeli military excesses, caricatured Malaysian political leaders, and taken swipes at Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore (Dunfee, 1989:9; see also, Chandy, 1980: 40-41; Lim, 1994b: 59-60).

Zunar (Zulkifli Annuar Al Haq) and Mulyadi Mahamood have helped in the professionalization of cartooning. Together with Lat, they started PEKARTUN (Persatuan Kartunis Selangor dan Kuala Lumpur) in 1991, an organization of 75 to 100 members meant to break the monopoly of *Gila-Gila* over cartoonists' rights, and to serve as a middle party between the government and the publics that cartoonists must serve (Interview, Zunar, 1993). PEKARTUN held a seminar in 1992 and a four-day workshop for beginning cartoonists the following year, and publishes a newsletter, *Peka*. Individually, Zunar, who is mainly a political cartoonist, helped start *Gila-Gila*. Mulyadi has made other contributions, such as writing about cartooning, encouraging his Institut Teknologi MARA graduate students to research the field (MARA has had 23 theses on cartooning, including one by Mulyadi), and teaching cartooning in his art classes. Since 1990, he has devoted four hours per term to cartooning, inviting cartoonists to guest lecture (Interview, Mulyadi, 1993). Mulyadi is pursuing a Ph.D. with a cartooning emphasis in England.

Noticeable here is that all of these innovators are men. Very few women have ventured into cartooning in Malaysia, and today, only one, Cabai of *Gila-Gila*, works fulltime (see Nik Naizi Husin and M. Hafez M. Soom, 1993: 111-113). One or two are parttimers. Zunar tried to give a reason for the shortage of women in the profession:

Woman in Malaysia is a complex problem. Normally, they have a lot of social problems related to their environment. Malay girls are not encouraged to draw; their parents only want them to be housewives. Some have talent but are discouraged (Interview, Zunar, 1993).

The third important impetus to the maturation of cartooning relates to the increased liberalness and freer atmosphere for cartoonists. Oldtimers remember when cartoonists were severely restricted in what they could draw. Lat, acknowledging that the situation had improved considerably by 1986, recalled:

In 1974, I could not draw the back of Tun Razak (then prime minister). I did a story about the possibility in the future of all cars going to be banned from the city because

In all this work, Lat makes social comments on Malaysia, ranging from "village life as seen through a young boy's eyes, to national politics, as observed by an irreverent bystander" (Suhaini Aznam, 1989: 42). He insists he is apolitical although "Scenes of Malaysian Life" has exposed Israeli military excesses, caricatured Malaysian political leaders, and taken swipes at Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore (Dunfee, 1989:9; see also, Chandy, 1980: 40-41; Lim, 1994b: 59-60).

Zunar (Zulkifli Annuar Al Haq) and Mulyadi Mahamood have helped in the professionalization of cartooning. Together with Lat, they started PEKARTUN (Persatuan Kartunis Selangor dan Kuala Lumpur) in 1991, an organization of 75 to 100 members meant to break the monopoly of *Gila-Gila* over cartoonists' rights, and to serve as a middle party between the government and the publics that cartoonists must serve (Interview, Zunar, 1993). PEKARTUN held a seminar in 1992 and a four-day workshop for beginning cartoonists the following year, and publishes a newsletter, *Peka*. Individually, Zunar, who is mainly a political cartoonist, helped start *Gila-Gila*. Mulyadi has made other contributions, such as writing about cartooning, encouraging his Institut Teknologi MARA graduate students to research the field (MARA has had 23 theses on cartooning, including one by Mulyadi), and teaching cartooning in his art classes. Since 1990, he has devoted four hours per term to cartooning, inviting cartoonists to guest lecture (Interview, Mulyadi, 1993). Mulyadi is pursuing a Ph.D. with a cartooning emphasis in England.

Noticeable here is that all of these innovators are men. Very few women have ventured into cartooning in Malaysia, and today, only one, Cabai of *Gila-Gila*, works fulltime (see Nik Naizi Husin and M. Hafez M. Soom, 1993: 111-113). One or two are parttimers. Zunar tried to give a reason for the shortage of women in the profession:

Woman in Malaysia is a complex problem. Normally, they have a lot of social problems related to their environment. Malay girls are not encouraged to draw; their parents only want them to be housewives. Some have talent but are discouraged (Interview, Zunar, 1993).

The third important impetus to the maturation of cartooning relates to the increased liberalness and freer atmosphere for cartoonists. Oldtimers remember when cartoonists were severely restricted in what they could draw. Lat, acknowledging that the situation had improved considerably by 1986, recalled:

In 1974, I could not draw the back of Tun Razak (then prime minister). I did a story about the possibility in the future of all cars going to be banned from the city because

it was too congested with traffic. So everyone just comes in by motorcycle or bicycle. I did the prime minister riding a motorcycle with his outriders and all; I drew him from the back ... So the editor called me in and said, "This is Tun Razak." I said, "Oh no, this is a fiction." But still it looked like him The editor said, "but you have to change him, thicken his hair" (Interview, Lat, 1986).

Provencher and Jaafar Omar (1988) showed in a number of examples, how the humor magazines lampooned the dilemmas of the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in the 1980s as it dealt with Malay nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism, and modernization. (5) In the 1990s, cartoonists even parodied the national sensitive issues. For example, Zunar said he poked fun at the feud between the government and royalty (Interview, Zunar, 1993), and Deen of *Gelihati* felt sensitive topics can be criticized, if not done too strongly (Interview, Deen, 1993). Zunar recommended that critical cartooning be approached with caution and politeness. He said:

One must criticize obliquely and be prepared to respond to ministers and others who are criticized. If I am prepared to respond to the minister, then it is easier for him and for me (Interview, Zunar, 1993).

Some writers have offered reasons why cartoonists are given leeway by the authorities. Among them are:

1. The much more powerful political position of the Malay community makes government censorship of Malay humour magazines less of risk;
2. The freedom is rooted in history in that cartooning is replacing dying traditional arts (*boria*, *wayang kulit*, and *bangsawan*), which allowed the public to vent grievances against the leadership through humour (Provencher and Jaafar Omar, 1988; Krishen Jir, 1989);
3. Cartoons are used and tolerated as a means to "cope with the stresses of multi-racial urban life" (Suhaini Aznam, 1989: 42). Suhaini Aznam (1989:42) hypothesized:

If humour is the fine art of escape, Malaysians have unconsciously refined the art form ... Malaysians laugh so they will not punch each other. Humour allows Indians, Chinese and Malays to laugh at themselves, so they will feel less the sting of others' racial barbs. Here, humour is used to highlight stereotypes, and then to destroy them; to whittle away racial differences and reach a common, sympathetic cord.

it was too congested with traffic. So everyone just comes in by motorcycle or bicycle. I did the prime minister riding a motorcycle with his outriders and all; I drew him from the back ... So the editor called me in and said, "This is Tun Razak." I said, "Oh no, this is a fiction." But still it looked like him The editor said, "but you have to change him, thicken his hair" (Interview, Lat, 1986).

Provencher and Jaafar Omar (1988) showed in a number of examples, how the humor magazines lampooned the dilemmas of the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in the 1980s as it dealt with Malay nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism, and modernization. (5) In the 1990s, cartoonists even parodied the national sensitive issues. For example, Zunar said he poked fun at the feud between the government and royalty (Interview, Zunar, 1993), and Deen of *Gelihati* felt sensitive topics can be criticized, if not done too strongly (Interview, Deen, 1993). Zunar recommended that critical cartooning be approached with caution and politeness. He said:

One must criticize obliquely and be prepared to respond to ministers and others who are criticized. If I am prepared to respond to the minister, then it is easier for him and for me (Interview, Zunar, 1993).

Some writers have offered reasons why cartoonists are given leeway by the authorities. Among them are:

1. The much more powerful political position of the Malay community makes government censorship of Malay humour magazines less of risk;
2. The freedom is rooted in history in that cartooning is replacing dying traditional arts (*boria*, *wayang kulit*, and *bangsawan*), which allowed the public to vent grievances against the leadership through humour (Provencher and Jaafar Omar, 1988; Krishen Jir, 1989);
3. Cartoons are used and tolerated as a means to "cope with the stresses of multi-racial urban life" (Suhaini Aznam, 1989: 42). Suhaini Aznam (1989:42) hypothesized:

If humour is the fine art of escape, Malaysians have unconsciously refined the art form ... Malaysians laugh so they will not punch each other. Humour allows Indians, Chinese and Malays to laugh at themselves, so they will feel less the sting of others' racial barbs. Here, humour is used to highlight stereotypes, and then to destroy them; to whittle away racial differences and reach a common, sympathetic cord.

Despite the better situation, restrictions continue and some works are rejected by editors and censored by government or religious officials. Quoting the then-editor of *Gila-Gila*, Sabri Haji Said, Rifas (1984: 100) wrote that there were taboos on "sex, bikinis, and G-strings and "sensitive issues" such as race. No racism is permitted. No making fun of any race, and no making fun of Islam." A cartoonist as well established as Lat still has rejections, "lots of rejections," as he put it. "My cartoons are either used or rejected. There is no such thing as changing a few lines here," he said, adding, "I'm used to getting rejections because they are, in a sense, taking care of things so nobody gets into trouble" (Interview, Lat, 1986; Lent, 1987: 30).

Censorship action occurs when there is a complaint. For example, the animated movie, "Aladdin," originally passed the censor board, but later was cut when the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia said some parts disparaged Arabs and Islam ("A Bumpy Carpet" 1993: 28). Such action is akin to what has been occurring under the term political correctness in the United States and some other Western countries.

Comic Strips and Comic Books

For a long time, Malay periodicals were modeled after those in Arabic in the Middle East, which did not use much illustration. Those that patterned themselves after British newspapers, notably *Utusan Melayu* and *Lembaga Melayu*, began using political cartoons in the 1920s.

By the next decade, newspaper strips on everyday life experiences of Malays appeared. Among the first such cartoon characters were "Wak Ketuk" (Uncle Tap Tap) and "Wak Keledok" (Uncle Tater), both drawn by Ali Sanat in *Utusan Zaman*. At the same time *Warta Jenaka*, a Malay magazine, used many social and political cartoons. In the English-language *Straits Echo* and *Times of Malaya*, Yankee Leong drew social commentary cartoons in the mid-1930s, usually pushing for international brotherhood and peace ("Yankee Leong ...," 1986:45-46).

During World War II, some propaganda comics in Malay (e.g. "Kerana Rakyat" or "For the People") were published, as well as others that appeared in the first Malay-language film magazine, *Film Melayu* (1941). Raja Hamzah and nationalist leader Senu Abdul Rahman also published comics as "a way of relieving the scarcity of Malay-language reading materials during the Japanese occupation" (Provencher, 1995).

Into the 1950s, periodicals such as *Warta Jenaka*, *Lembaga*, *Warta Ahad*, *Utusan Melayu*, and *Majlis*, carried cartoons that featured the works of Ali Sanat, Salehuddin, Saidin Yahya, and Rashid Din. They were succeeded by Rosdin, Raja Hamzah, and Rejab Had. Some, such as Zainal Buang Hussein and Raja Hamzah, did both cartoons and comics; the latter contributed "Toyol" (Ghost Story) to *Berita Minggu* in the 1970s (Mulyadi,

Despite the better situation, restrictions continue and some works are rejected by editors and censored by government or religious officials. Quoting the then-editor of *Gila-Gila*, Sabri Haji Said, Rifas (1984: 100) wrote that there were taboos on "sex, bikinis, and G-strings and "sensitive issues" such as race. No racism is permitted. No making fun of any race, and no making fun of Islam." A cartoonist as well established as Lat still has rejections, "lots of rejections," as he put it. "My cartoons are either used or rejected. There is no such thing as changing a few lines here," he said, adding, "I'm used to getting rejections because they are, in a sense, taking care of things so nobody gets into trouble" (Interview, Lat, 1986; Lent, 1987: 30).

Censorship action occurs when there is a complaint. For example, the animated movie, "Aladdin," originally passed the censor board, but later was cut when the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia said some parts disparaged Arabs and Islam ("A Bumpy Carpet" 1993: 28). Such action is akin to what has been occurring under the term political correctness in the United States and some other Western countries.

Comic Strips and Comic Books

For a long time, Malay periodicals were modeled after those in Arabic in the Middle East, which did not use much illustration. Those that patterned themselves after British newspapers, notably *Utusan Melayu* and *Lembaga Melayu*, began using political cartoons in the 1920s.

By the next decade, newspaper strips on everyday life experiences of Malays appeared. Among the first such cartoon characters were "Wak Ketuk" (Uncle Tap Tap) and "Wak Keledok" (Uncle Tater), both drawn by Ali Sanat in *Utusan Zaman*. At the same time *Warta Jenaka*, a Malay magazine, used many social and political cartoons. In the English-language *Straits Echo* and *Times of Malaya*, Yankee Leong drew social commentary cartoons in the mid-1930s, usually pushing for international brotherhood and peace ("Yankee Leong ...," 1986:45-46).

During World War II, some propaganda comics in Malay (e.g. "Kerana Rakyat" or "For the People") were published, as well as others that appeared in the first Malay-language film magazine, *Film Melayu* (1941). Raja Hamzah and nationalist leader Senu Abdul Rahman also published comics as "a way of relieving the scarcity of Malay-language reading materials during the Japanese occupation" (Provencher, 1995).

Into the 1950s, periodicals such as *Warta Jenaka*, *Lembaga*, *Warta Ahad*, *Utusan Melayu*, and *Majlis*, carried cartoons that featured the works of Ali Sanat, Salehuddin, Saidin Yahya, and Rashid Din. They were succeeded by Rosdin, Raja Hamzah, and Rejab Had. Some, such as Zainal Buang Hussein and Raja Hamzah, did both cartoons and comics; the latter contributed "Toyol" (Ghost Story) to *Berita Minggu* in the 1970s (Mulyadi,

1990: 8). Raja Hamzah's and other's strips, as well as comic books of the 1950s and 1960s, made a point of "portraying and reinterpreting various aspects of Malay folklore and classical Malay literature, possibly as a pride-filled response to the success of the Malay nationalist movement" (Provencher, 1995).

However, local newspaper strips, made up of a sequence of three or four panels, remained a rarity through those years. The inexpensive, (6) longer-established, syndicated strips prevailed. Lat said that before his newspaper cartoon, "there was nothing. They only printed foreign comics, and they didn't draw us. It was not Malaysian ... It always had something to do with something Western involved" (Interview, Lat, 1986).

Looking at 18 Malaysian dailies in 1973, I found that of the total 21 strips, only six (all Chinese) were locally drawn (7). On Sundays, *Berita Minggu* carried "Tok Misai" by Rousen and "Keluarga Si-Mamat" by Lat, in addition to the syndicated strips, "Nancy," "Batman," and "Tarzan" (Lent, 1973: 10-12).

By 1993, the situation improved slightly (8). *The New Straits Times* used 11 U.S. strips and "Tok Guru," by Sofiyan Yahya, while the Sunday *New Straits Times*, in its eight-page, color funnies section, was devoid of local strips, instead featuring 17 non-Malaysian ones. *Utusan Malaysia* carried one joke, "Senyum Kambing," on the front page, plus "Senyum Pagi" of four strips, and *Harian Metro* had a page of six local strips. *Berita Harian* used no local strips; nor did *The Malay Mail* in its two-page, 12 strip section. *The Star* also carried two pages for a total of 12 strips; only C. W. Kee's "Kee's World" was local. Kee's "It's a Durian Life" was the only Malaysian-drawn strip among the six pages of cartoons in the *Sunday Star*.

Malaysians experienced their first comic books in the late 1930s when British books (*The Beano*, *Beezer*, *The Dandy*, and *Topper*) came in as scrap wrapping paper sold by the weight. By the 1950s and 1960s, referred to as the golden age by Lat, six publishers dealt with comic books—Malay Press, Zawiyah, Penerbitan Keluarga, Penerbit Melayu, Kassim Ahmad, and Jabatan Pelajaran dan Persuratan Kedah. Most of the comic books of this period portrayed Malay folklore and classical Malay literature (Provencher, 1995).

A breakthrough occurred in mid-1973 when a number of cartoonists linked to form Suarasa Company, a publishing house for educational comics (Lent, 1982: 41). The first of its titles, *Bambino*, had 16 pages of six strips, letters, puzzles, games, short stories, poetry, folklore, and teasers. The initial press run of 10,000 copies was tripled within a year. Other titles were *Bujal*, a 30-page book whose main character could have been a twin of the United States' "Slugo"; *Anak Rusa Nani*, 16 pages of seven strips, puzzles, etc., and *Rina*, a 24-page comic. The price of these comics was about sixteen to twenty U.S. cents. All four popularized Malay legends in serialized form and included puzzles and colouring competitions. The artists were rounded up by Suarasa from newspapers, magazines, and agencies (Zailah

1990: 8). Raja Hamzah's and other's strips, as well as comic books of the 1950s and 1960s, made a point of "portraying and reinterpreting various aspects of Malay folklore and classical Malay literature, possibly as a pride-filled response to the success of the Malay nationalist movement" (Provencher, 1995).

However, local newspaper strips, made up of a sequence of three or four panels, remained a rarity through those years. The inexpensive, (6) longer-established, syndicated strips prevailed. Lat said that before his newspaper cartoon, "there was nothing. They only printed foreign comics, and they didn't draw us. It was not Malaysian ... It always had something to do with something Western involved" (Interview, Lat, 1986).

Looking at 18 Malaysian dailies in 1973, I found that of the total 21 strips, only six (all Chinese) were locally drawn (7). On Sundays, *Berita Minggu* carried "Tok Misai" by Rousen and "Keluarga Si-Mamat" by Lat, in addition to the syndicated strips, "Nancy," "Batman," and "Tarzan" (Lent, 1973: 10-12).

By 1993, the situation improved slightly (8). *The New Straits Times* used 11 U.S. strips and "Tok Guru," by Sofiyan Yahya, while the Sunday *New Straits Times*, in its eight-page, color funnies section, was devoid of local strips, instead featuring 17 non-Malaysian ones. *Utusan Malaysia* carried one joke, "Senyum Kambing," on the front page, plus "Senyum Pagi" of four strips, and *Harian Metro* had a page of six local strips. *Berita Harian* used no local strips; nor did *The Malay Mail* in its two-page, 12 strip section. *The Star* also carried two pages for a total of 12 strips; only C. W. Kee's "Kee's World" was local. Kee's "It's a Durian Life" was the only Malaysian-drawn strip among the six pages of cartoons in the *Sunday Star*.

Malaysians experienced their first comic books in the late 1930s when British books (*The Beano*, *Beezer*, *The Dandy*, and *Topper*) came in as scrap wrapping paper sold by the weight. By the 1950s and 1960s, referred to as the golden age by Lat, six publishers dealt with comic books—Malay Press, Zawiyah, Penerbitan Keluarga, Penerbit Melayu, Kassim Ahmad, and Jabatan Pelajaran dan Persuratan Kedah. Most of the comic books of this period portrayed Malay folklore and classical Malay literature (Provencher, 1995).

A breakthrough occurred in mid-1973 when a number of cartoonists linked to form Suarasa Company, a publishing house for educational comics (Lent, 1982: 41). The first of its titles, *Bambino*, had 16 pages of six strips, letters, puzzles, games, short stories, poetry, folklore, and teasers. The initial press run of 10,000 copies was tripled within a year. Other titles were *Bujal*, a 30-page book whose main character could have been a twin of the United States' "Slugo"; *Anak Rusa Nani*, 16 pages of seven strips, puzzles, etc., and *Rina*, a 24-page comic. The price of these comics was about sixteen to twenty U.S. cents. All four popularized Malay legends in serialized form and included puzzles and colouring competitions. The artists were rounded up by Suarasa from newspapers, magazines, and agencies (Zailah

Ismail, 1973).

When Rifas (1984: 97) surveyed Malaysian cartooning a decade later, he reported two companies publishing comic books, each with four to eight titles monthly, mostly of historical and warrior-adventure genres. Their circulations were 15,000 each; they sold for fifteen U.S. cents. Two or three publishers brought out foto comics, made up of posed photographs with superimposed balloons for dialogue. Rifas found a large number of imported comics from England, U.S., Hong Kong (9), and Taiwan, a situation that has not changed as Malaysia normally does not impede their importation. Unlike in some parts of Asia, Malaysian cartoonists have not been known to speak out against the importation of foreign comics. As one of them said, "It would be unfair to stop importing these comics if Malaysia can't produce enough locally" (Interview, Zunar, 1993).

Three inter-related developments during the mid-1980s advanced the public's awareness of comics even further. In January 1983, Daniel Chan began writing his weekly *New Straits Times* column on comics, "Comicscene," which introduced and reviewed foreign and local comics. (10) Through the column, and with help from Books Distributors Sdn. Bhd. and the French Embassy, Chan launched the first Malaysian Comics Convention in April 1984, attended by 300 fans. Attendance more than tripled (1,000) for the second convention in 1985, where the first Malaysian APAzine was published with the works of Malaysian comics artists. It was at this convention that a local businessman, Alex Kong, got the idea to open a comics specialty shop, which he did in January 1986. He opened two other shops later (Lim, 1994a: 58).

By the 1990s, Malaysia had 15 comics stores, eight of which were in Kuala Lumpur. Their main stock is U.S. comic books. Unlike those in Singapore, comics specialty shops in Malaysia continue to survive, partly because there is less competition and more population to draw an audience from, but mainly because the store owners have a gentleman's agreement to settle prices, thus avoiding price wars and undercutting (Lim, 1994a: 59).

Trends and Problems

The cartooning community has reason to be optimistic as more commercial and professional opportunities are made available. Having Lat as an example, cartoonists realize they can make a comfortable living with the many commercial possibilities they have. Some have accepted jobs in advertising, others have tied in with the government's interest in getting its messages across through cartoons, while a few have begun experimenting with animation. Among the latter are Lat, who has brought "Kampung Boy" to the screen and Hassan Mutalib of Filem Negara, who is working on a full-length animation feature for the 1995 French Film Festival and has already completed three animated works on Malaysian fables, as well as television

Ismail, 1973).

When Rifas (1984: 97) surveyed Malaysian cartooning a decade later, he reported two companies publishing comic books, each with four to eight titles monthly, mostly of historical and warrior-adventure genres. Their circulations were 15,000 each; they sold for fifteen U.S. cents. Two or three publishers brought out foto comics, made up of posed photographs with superimposed balloons for dialogue. Rifas found a large number of imported comics from England, U.S., Hong Kong (9), and Taiwan, a situation that has not changed as Malaysia normally does not impede their importation. Unlike in some parts of Asia, Malaysian cartoonists have not been known to speak out against the importation of foreign comics. As one of them said, "It would be unfair to stop importing these comics if Malaysia can't produce enough locally" (Interview, Zunar, 1993).

Three inter-related developments during the mid-1980s advanced the public's awareness of comics even further. In January 1983, Daniel Chan began writing his weekly *New Straits Times* column on comics, "Comicscene," which introduced and reviewed foreign and local comics. (10) Through the column, and with help from Books Distributors Sdn. Bhd. and the French Embassy, Chan launched the first Malaysian Comics Convention in April 1984, attended by 300 fans. Attendance more than tripled (1,000) for the second convention in 1985, where the first Malaysian APAzine was published with the works of Malaysian comics artists. It was at this convention that a local businessman, Alex Kong, got the idea to open a comics specialty shop, which he did in January 1986. He opened two other shops later (Lim, 1994a: 58).

By the 1990s, Malaysia had 15 comics stores, eight of which were in Kuala Lumpur. Their main stock is U.S. comic books. Unlike those in Singapore, comics specialty shops in Malaysia continue to survive, partly because there is less competition and more population to draw an audience from, but mainly because the store owners have a gentleman's agreement to settle prices, thus avoiding price wars and undercutting (Lim, 1994a: 59).

Trends and Problems

The cartooning community has reason to be optimistic as more commercial and professional opportunities are made available. Having Lat as an example, cartoonists realize they can make a comfortable living with the many commercial possibilities they have. Some have accepted jobs in advertising, others have tied in with the government's interest in getting its messages across through cartoons, while a few have begun experimenting with animation. Among the latter are Lat, who has brought "Kampung Boy" to the screen and Hassan Mutalib of Filem Negara, who is working on a full-length animation feature for the 1995 French Film Festival and has already completed three animated works on Malaysian fables, as well as television

commercials (Interview, Zunar, 1993). Television animation is still very scarce, with one company, Lensa Mation, doing animated commercials for that medium (Interview, Deen, 1993). In a few cases, Malaysian cartoonists have found overseas markets. Lat's work has been distributed in other parts of Asia and in North America, and Sofiyan's "Tok Guru" is carried by a Singapore daily. Sofiyan, whose strip reflects the *kampung* folks' good natured acceptance of modernization, has plans to distribute "Tok Guru" throughout Southeast Asia and parts of Europe (Mariadass, 1991).

Comics and humour magazines are widely visible on department store and pharmacy magazine racks(11), advertising posters and billboards, and the paraphernalia connected to cartoon characters. For example, *Gila-Gila* uses main characters from the magazine on merchandise such as T-shirts, mugs, towels, watches, pens, and key chains. That cartoonists have developed their own characters (12) and the public is becoming aware of them bode well for the profession.

Cartoonists are being given long-overdue recognition (12), particularly with the conferring of the "datuk" title on Lat, and with the realization that there is a fine line, if any, between "high visual arts" and comic art. Mulyadi takes note of the latter, showing that famous artist Zulkifli Dahlan used much caricature and is closer to being a cartoonist than anything else. Mulyadi calls Zulkifli's "One Day in the Forbidden Land" (1978) a "giant cartoon on canvas" (Mulyadi, 1990).

The profession has had other boosts in recent years with the development of PEKARTUN and its activities to promote cartooning, the increasing number of outlets for cartoonists, and the gradual Malaysianization of newspaper strips and editorial cartoons.

Perhaps the most favorable conditions are reflected in the growing number of cartoonists, up to about 300, and the possibility, according to Mulyadi (Interview, 1993), that many will leave the publishing companies to work independently.

High on the list of problems that persist is the unclear policy concerning creators' rights. Under the copyright law, which Zunar called "very good," a work is protected for 50 years, after which it becomes public domain. The hitch is determining who is the owner of a work. Zunar explained:

When a publisher uses your cartoons, you can negotiate whether you want to hold the copyright. If you decide yes, you're paid a royalty. If no, and the publisher wants to hold the copyright, then the publisher pays you an honorarium. The agreement the cartoonist and publisher work out becomes the law. But additionally, the publisher has publisher's rights. Thus, a cartoonist can hold the copyright but the publisher still has rights. And the practice is

commercials (Interview, Zunar, 1993). Television animation is still very scarce, with one company, Lensa Mation, doing animated commercials for that medium (Interview, Deen, 1993). In a few cases, Malaysian cartoonists have found overseas markets. Lat's work has been distributed in other parts of Asia and in North America, and Sofiyan's "Tok Guru" is carried by a Singapore daily. Sofiyan, whose strip reflects the *kampung* folks' good natured acceptance of modernization, has plans to distribute "Tok Guru" throughout Southeast Asia and parts of Europe (Mariadass, 1991).

Comics and humour magazines are widely visible on department store and pharmacy magazine racks(11), advertising posters and billboards, and the paraphernalia connected to cartoon characters. For example, *Gila-Gila* uses main characters from the magazine on merchandise such as T-shirts, mugs, towels, watches, pens, and key chains. That cartoonists have developed their own characters (12) and the public is becoming aware of them bode well for the profession.

Cartoonists are being given long-overdue recognition (12), particularly with the conferring of the "datuk" title on Lat, and with the realization that there is a fine line, if any, between "high visual arts" and comic art. Mulyadi takes note of the latter, showing that famous artist Zulkifli Dahlan used much caricature and is closer to being a cartoonist than anything else. Mulyadi calls Zulkifli's "One Day in the Forbidden Land" (1978) a "giant cartoon on canvas" (Mulyadi, 1990).

The profession has had other boosts in recent years with the development of PEKARTUN and its activities to promote cartooning, the increasing number of outlets for cartoonists, and the gradual Malaysianization of newspaper strips and editorial cartoons.

Perhaps the most favorable conditions are reflected in the growing number of cartoonists, up to about 300, and the possibility, according to Mulyadi (Interview, 1993), that many will leave the publishing companies to work independently.

High on the list of problems that persist is the unclear policy concerning creators' rights. Under the copyright law, which Zunar called "very good," a work is protected for 50 years, after which it becomes public domain. The hitch is determining who is the owner of a work. Zunar explained:

When a publisher uses your cartoons, you can negotiate whether you want to hold the copyright. If you decide yes, you're paid a royalty. If no, and the publisher wants to hold the copyright, then the publisher pays you an honorarium. The agreement the cartoonist and publisher work out becomes the law. But additionally, the publisher has publisher's rights. Thus, a cartoonist can hold the copyright but the publisher still has rights. And the practice is

different from the law in that when a publisher uses a cartoonist's works, he assumes he owns all of it, has all the rights (14) (Interview, Zunar, 1993).

One of the goals of PEKARTUN is to clarify creator's rights.

The marketability of cartoons, admittedly much better than in the past, is likely to become more precarious. First of all, most Malaysian cartoons have no outside market as they are in Bahasa Malaysia. Singapore and Indonesia, which could be outlets for Malay comics, restrict the importation of Malaysian publications. Compounding the problem is that knowledge of English has deteriorated among Malaysians, and most cartoonists are not able to work effectively in that language. Second, because Malaysia is a multi-lingual country, cartoonists working solely in one language cannot reach even all of Malaysia. Third, cartoons are not permitted to have more than one market; they are produced for a newspaper or magazine and cannot be used elsewhere. There is no syndication of cartoons in Malaysia, although PEKARTUN is looking into the feasibility of this option. Fourth, the existing market is becoming saturated. This results from too many humour magazines and cartoonists using the same formats, topics, and styles. All humour periodicals rely mainly on visualized jokes. As for the cartoonists, Zunar said, they are not well read or knowledgeable about world events. Instead, they like to draw on nostalgia—what they recall as kampung boys. If too many cartoonists are using the same theme, this is not good for the future of the profession (Interview, Zunar, 1993).

Another problem faced by cartoonists relates to publishers and editors who are not versed in or respectful of cartooning. Thus far, Malaysia has not benefited from the likes of a Joseph Patterson or William Randolph Hearst in the U.S., who took a keen interest in comics and built up a stable of cartoonists. In Malaysia, cartoonists complain that editors do not provide much space for cartoons, are slow in paying freelancers (Interview, Az, 1993), and tamper with the work. The editor of one newspaper has taken horizontal strips and formatted them vertically (Interview, Zunar, 1993).

Conclusion

As indicated previously, cartooning in Malaysia has come a long way during the past generation. Today, the business community recognizes its potential to sell goods; sectors of government, its ability to promote developmental and political messages, and parts of the artistic profession, its alignment to what they are doing.

different from the law in that when a publisher uses a cartoonist's works, he assumes he owns all of it, has all the rights (14) (Interview, Zunar, 1993).

One of the goals of PEKARTUN is to clarify creator's rights.

The marketability of cartoons, admittedly much better than in the past, is likely to become more precarious. First of all, most Malaysian cartoons have no outside market as they are in Bahasa Malaysia. Singapore and Indonesia, which could be outlets for Malay comics, restrict the importation of Malaysian publications. Compounding the problem is that knowledge of English has deteriorated among Malaysians, and most cartoonists are not able to work effectively in that language. Second, because Malaysia is a multi-lingual country, cartoonists working solely in one language cannot reach even all of Malaysia. Third, cartoons are not permitted to have more than one market; they are produced for a newspaper or magazine and cannot be used elsewhere. There is no syndication of cartoons in Malaysia, although PEKARTUN is looking into the feasibility of this option. Fourth, the existing market is becoming saturated. This results from too many humour magazines and cartoonists using the same formats, topics, and styles. All humour periodicals rely mainly on visualized jokes. As for the cartoonists, Zunar said, they are not well read or knowledgeable about world events. Instead, they like to draw on nostalgia—what they recall as kampung boys. If too many cartoonists are using the same theme, this is not good for the future of the profession (Interview, Zunar, 1993).

Another problem faced by cartoonists relates to publishers and editors who are not versed in or respectful of cartooning. Thus far, Malaysia has not benefited from the likes of a Joseph Patterson or William Randolph Hearst in the U.S., who took a keen interest in comics and built up a stable of cartoonists. In Malaysia, cartoonists complain that editors do not provide much space for cartoons, are slow in paying freelancers (Interview, Az, 1993), and tamper with the work. The editor of one newspaper has taken horizontal strips and formatted them vertically (Interview, Zunar, 1993).

Conclusion

As indicated previously, cartooning in Malaysia has come a long way during the past generation. Today, the business community recognizes its potential to sell goods; sectors of government, its ability to promote developmental and political messages, and parts of the artistic profession, its alignment to what they are doing.

Notes

- 1 Refers to political, gag, and advertising cartoons; comic strips; comic books and magazines; animation, and humorous illustration.
- 2 There is disagreement concerning this point. In 1973, an exhibition of cartoons was held in Kuala Lumpur. I was the featured speaker at the exhibition opening.
- 3 Earlier, in 1973, Mishar did a strip, "Ragam Pak Buyung," for *Utusan Malaysia*.
- 4 Some of the spinoffs of Lat's cartoons have been memo pads, children's coloring books, T-shirts, and calendars.
- 5 Discussing specific topics, Provencher and Jaafar Omar (1988) said Malay history and legend get much attention, that other ethnic groups figure regularly in all humor magazines, and that political satire is "very common," except in *Komedi Gila-Gila* had a regular column called "Malay Dilema" and in one issue of *Toyol*, the agriculture minister was satirized. The authors added: "UMNO party politics are commented upon, as are corruption, the "Look East" policy, prison conditions, and the military, as well as (in a very sly fashion) the powers of royalty, and the pressures to conform. A very large part of cartooning is devoted to youth."
- 6 As late as the 1980s, it costs a Malaysian daily as little as M\$5 per foreign strip installment.
- 7 Not much changed a decade later when Rifas (1984: 97) reported an absence of local strips. For example, the November 1983 *New Straits Times* offered "Buck Rogers in the 25th Century," "Star Wars," "Bringing Up Father," "Blondie," "Ally Oop," and "Bugs Bunny." Rifas pointed out two local strips—the first serialized strip in Malaysia and Singapore, "ABU", and "Guli Guli" (Marbles), which appeared in the *New Sunday Times* in 1983. Both were done by Lim Kok Wing.
- 8 A sample of Malaysian newspapers was checked On August 7.
- 9 Popular British comics in Malaysia were those depicting war and romance, as well as the comics tabloids, *The Dandy*, *The Beano*, *Princess*, *Eagle*, and *Battle*. From the U.S. came the DC, Marvel, Archie, and Charlton books (Rifas, 1984: 97).
- 10 The column survives and has since been joined by "Worlds of Wonder" (originally "Marvellous Mags") in *The Star*.
- 11 A Kuala Lumpur pharmacy I visited in August 1993 carried the Asiapac Comic Series and a couple of Cheah Sin Ann's books from Singapore, about 15 titles of Taiwan's Tsai Chih Chung, a couple of Ronald Chu's comics, also from Taiwan, and many of Lat's books.
- 12 Such as Lat's very popular "Mamat," Sofiyah's "Tok Guru," Deen's "Bad Cannibal Guy," or Az's "Oh Fatimah," to name a few.
- 13 One example is "Hello Malaysia," a show on Radio Television Malaysia which, among its guests, includes a different cartoonist every week.

Notes

- 1 Refers to political, gag, and advertising cartoons; comic strips; comic books and magazines; animation, and humorous illustration.
- 2 There is disagreement concerning this point. In 1973, an exhibition of cartoons was held in Kuala Lumpur. I was the featured speaker at the exhibition opening.
- 3 Earlier, in 1973, Mishar did a strip, "Ragam Pak Buyung," for *Utusan Malaysia*.
- 4 Some of the spinoffs of Lat's cartoons have been memo pads, children's coloring books, T-shirts, and calendars.
- 5 Discussing specific topics, Provencher and Jaafar Omar (1988) said Malay history and legend get much attention, that other ethnic groups figure regularly in all humor magazines, and that political satire is "very common," except in *Komedi Gila-Gila* had a regular column called "Malay Dilema" and in one issue of *Toyol*, the agriculture minister was satirized. The authors added: "UMNO party politics are commented upon, as are corruption, the "Look East" policy, prison conditions, and the military, as well as (in a very sly fashion) the powers of royalty, and the pressures to conform. A very large part of cartooning is devoted to youth."
- 6 As late as the 1980s, it costs a Malaysian daily as little as M\$5 per foreign strip installment.
- 7 Not much changed a decade later when Rifas (1984: 97) reported an absence of local strips. For example, the November 1983 *New Straits Times* offered "Buck Rogers in the 25th Century," "Star Wars," "Bringing Up Father," "Blondie," "Ally Oop," and "Bugs Bunny." Rifas pointed out two local strips—the first serialized strip in Malaysia and Singapore, "ABU", and "Guli Guli" (Marbles), which appeared in the *New Sunday Times* in 1983. Both were done by Lim Kok Wing.
- 8 A sample of Malaysian newspapers was checked On August 7.
- 9 Popular British comics in Malaysia were those depicting war and romance, as well as the comics tabloids, *The Dandy*, *The Beano*, *Princess*, *Eagle*, and *Battle*. From the U.S. came the DC, Marvel, Archie, and Charlton books (Rifas, 1984: 97).
- 10 The column survives and has since been joined by "Worlds of Wonder" (originally "Marvellous Mags") in *The Star*.
- 11 A Kuala Lumpur pharmacy I visited in August 1993 carried the Asiapac Comic Series and a couple of Cheah Sin Ann's books from Singapore, about 15 titles of Taiwan's Tsai Chih Chung, a couple of Ronald Chu's comics, also from Taiwan, and many of Lat's books.
- 12 Such as Lat's very popular "Mamat," Sofiyah's "Tok Guru," Deen's "Bad Cannibal Guy," or Az's "Oh Fatimah," to name a few.
- 13 One example is "Hello Malaysia," a show on Radio Television Malaysia which, among its guests, includes a different cartoonist every week.

- 14 Including the characters. In Malaysia, the cartoonist registers all of his characters with the patent office in addition to copyrighting the strip as an entity.

References

- Aznam, S. 1989. Quipping Away at Racism. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 14: 42, 46.
1993. A Bumpy Carpet. *Asiaweek*, July 14: 28.
- Chandy, G. 1980. Lat: The Malaysian Folk Hero. *The New Straits Times Annual*. pp. 38-42. Kuala Lumpur: New Straits Times.
- Dunfee, E. J. 1989. The Joker's Wild. *Asia Magazine*, March 19: 8-10, 12-13.
- Krishen Jir. 1989. Observations on the Social Function of Cartoons, Caricature and Comics. *Karikatur Kartun dan Komik*. Kuala Lumpur: Balai Senilukis Negara.
- Lent, J. A. 1973. Few Laughs Left for Asia's Cartoonists. *Leader: Malaysian Journalism Review*, 2: 10-12.
- Lent, J. A. 1982. Comic Books, Funnies and Political Cartoons: The Asian Experience. *International Popular Culture*, 2: 2, pp. 22-51.
- Lent, J. A. 1987. A Lot of Lat: An Interview with Malaysia's Premier Cartoonist. *Witty World*, Spring: 28-30.
- Lim Cheng Tju. 1994a. Comicscene Forever. *Big O*, February: 58-59.
- Lim Cheng Tju. 1994b. Just a Simple Man. *Big O*, January: 59-60.
- Mariadass, T. 1991. Kampung View of Progress. *New Paper*, December 24.
- Muliyadi, M. 1990. A Brief History of Malaysian Cartoons. *Perjumpaan Kartunis Antarabangsa*. Kuala Lumpur.
- Nik Naizi Husin & M. Hafez M. Soom. 1993. Cabai: Kartunis Wanita Yang Gigih. *Sasaran*, July: 111-113.
- Provencher, R. 1990. Covering Malay Humor Magazines: Satire and Parody of Malaysian Political Dilemmas. *Crossroads*, 5:2, pp. 1-25.
- Provencher, R. 1995. Modern Malay Foklore: The Humor Magazines. *Asian Popular Culture*, John A. Lent. (ed). Boulder: Westview.
- Provencher, R. Forthcoming. Travels with the Headman: Rejab Had, Cartoonist and Teacher. In special number on cartooning of Asia, *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, edited by John A. Lent.
- Provencher, R. & Jaafar Omar. 1988. Malay Humor Magazines as a Resource for the Study of Modern Malay Culture. *Sari*, 6: 87-99.
- Rifas, L. 1984. Comics in Malaysia. *Comics Journal*. October: 96-101.
- Leong, Y. 1984. An Obituary to Malaysia's Foremost Prewar Artist and Cartoonist. *Malaysian Journalism Review*, April-June, 45-46.
- Zailah Ismail. 1973. Turning to Our Own Legends To Delight the Children. *New Straits Times*, October 21.

- 14 Including the characters. In Malaysia, the cartoonist registers all of his characters with the patent office in addition to copyrighting the strip as an entity.

References

- Aznam, S. 1989. Quipping Away at Racism. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 14: 42, 46.
1993. A Bumpy Carpet. *Asiaweek*, July 14: 28.
- Chandy, G. 1980. Lat: The Malaysian Folk Hero. *The New Straits Times Annual*. pp. 38-42. Kuala Lumpur: New Straits Times.
- Dunfee, E. J. 1989. The Joker's Wild. *Asia Magazine*, March 19: 8-10, 12-13.
- Krishen Jir. 1989. Observations on the Social Function of Cartoons, Caricature and Comics. *Karikatur Kartun dan Komik*. Kuala Lumpur: Balai Senilukis Negara.
- Lent, J. A. 1973. Few Laughs Left for Asia's Cartoonists. *Leader: Malaysian Journalism Review*, 2: 10-12.
- Lent, J. A. 1982. Comic Books, Funnies and Political Cartoons: The Asian Experience. *International Popular Culture*, 2: 2, pp. 22-51.
- Lent, J. A. 1987. A Lot of Lat: An Interview with Malaysia's Premier Cartoonist. *Witty World*, Spring: 28-30.
- Lim Cheng Tju. 1994a. Comicscene Forever. *Big O*, February: 58-59.
- Lim Cheng Tju. 1994b. Just a Simple Man. *Big O*, January: 59-60.
- Mariadass, T. 1991. Kampung View of Progress. *New Paper*, December 24.
- Muliyadi, M. 1990. A Brief History of Malaysian Cartoons. *Perjumpaan Kartunis Antarabangsa*. Kuala Lumpur.
- Nik Naizi Husin & M. Hafez M. Soom. 1993. Cabai: Kartunis Wanita Yang Gigih. *Sasaran*, July: 111-113.
- Provencher, R. 1990. Covering Malay Humor Magazines: Satire and Parody of Malaysian Political Dilemmas. *Crossroads*, 5:2, pp. 1-25.
- Provencher, R. 1995. Modern Malay Foklore: The Humor Magazines. *Asian Popular Culture*, John A. Lent. (ed). Boulder: Westview.
- Provencher, R. Forthcoming. Travels with the Headman: Rejab Had, Cartoonist and Teacher. In special number on cartooning of Asia, *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, edited by John A. Lent.
- Provencher, R. & Jaafar Omar. 1988. Malay Humor Magazines as a Resource for the Study of Modern Malay Culture. *Sari*, 6: 87-99.
- Rifas, L. 1984. Comics in Malaysia. *Comics Journal*. October: 96-101.
- Leong, Y. 1984. An Obituary to Malaysia's Foremost Prewar Artist and Cartoonist. *Malaysian Journalism Review*, April-June, 45-46.
- Zailah Ismail. 1973. Turning to Our Own Legends To Delight the Children. *New Straits Times*, October 21.

Interviews

- Az (Azmi Md. Taha), 1993. cartoonist, *Gelihati*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, August 6.
- Deen (Nordin Misnan), 1993. cartoonist, *Gelihati*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, August 6.
- Lat (Mohd. Nor Khalid), 1986. cartoonist, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, November.
- Muliyadi Mahamood, 1993. Vice President, PEKARTUN, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, August 8.
- Zunar (Zulkifli Annuar Al Haq), 1993. cartoonist, Secretary, PEKARTUN, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, August 7.

Interviews

- Az (Azmi Md. Taha), 1993. cartoonist, *Gelihati*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, August 6.
- Deen (Nordin Misnan), 1993. cartoonist, *Gelihati*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, August 6.
- Lat (Mohd. Nor Khalid), 1986. cartoonist, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, November.
- Muliyadi Mahamood, 1993. Vice President, PEKARTUN, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, August 8.
- Zunar (Zulkifli Annuar Al Haq), 1993. cartoonist, Secretary, PEKARTUN, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, August 7.

7 September 1936, m.s. 15 (WJ 2)

Suatu sindiran terhadap kemodenan, gejala baru yang terdapat di kalangan masyarakat Melayu. Topik-topik mengenai 'kemodenan' kerap dibincangkan di dalam penulisan-penulisan akhbar dan majalah di kala itu. Beberapa karikatur lain di dalam majalah *Warta Jenaka* juga membayangkan gara-gara modenisasi dan membuat sindiran terhadap masyarakat yang pentingkan cara hidup 'moden'.

Pelukis karikatur ini, Abd. Manan dari Sekolah Melayu, Taiping memberi tajuk 'Telingin Kemoden' bagi karyanya dengan menggunakan haiwan sebagai watak-wataknya. Ramai penulis di ketika itu menyamakan kemodenan dengan orang berai yang dikatakan banyak 'mengikut kelakuan hawani'. Burbagi pantun dan syair di dalam akhbar mengijak orang timur, khususnya orang-orang Melayu supaya berwaspada terhadap pengaruh barat.

.....Jangan ke barat marilah mudak
Timur kita juga yang wajib diselidik.....



Cartoon in *Warta Jenaka*, September 7, 1936

7 September 1936, m.s. 15 (WJ 2)

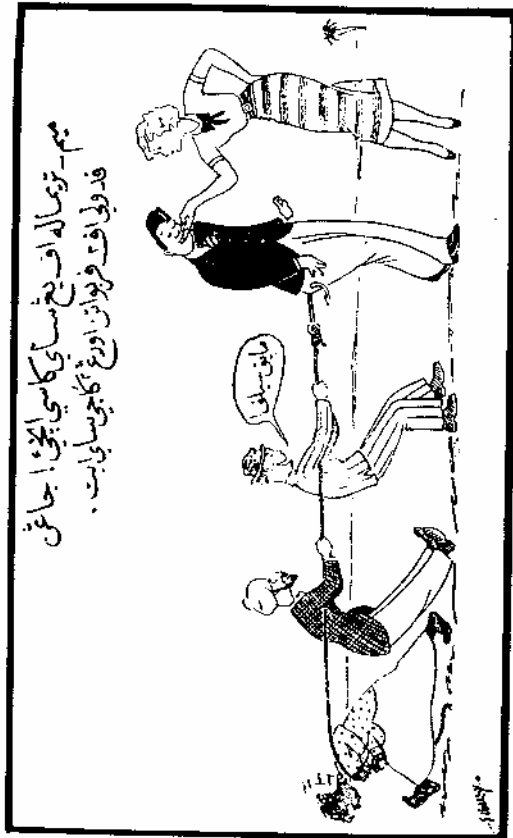
Suatu sindiran terhadap kemodenan, gejala baru yang terdapat di kalangan masyarakat Melayu. Topik-topik mengenai 'kemodenan' kerap dibincangkan di dalam penulisan-penulisan akhbar dan majalah di kala itu. Beberapa karikatur lain di dalam majalah *Warta Jenaka* juga membayangkan gara-gara modenisasi dan membuat sindiran terhadap masyarakat yang pentingkan cara hidup 'moden'.

Pelukis karikatur ini, Abd. Manan dari Sekolah Melayu, Taiping memberi tajuk 'Telingan Kemoden' bagi karyanya dengan menggunakan haiwan sebagai watak-wataknya. Ramai penulis di ketika itu menyamakan kemodenan dengan orang berai yang dikatakan banyak 'mengikut kelakuan hawani'. Burbagai pantun dan syair di dalam akhbar mengijak orang timur, khususnya orang-orang Melayu supaya berwaspada terhadap pengaruh barat.

.....Jangan ke barat marilah mudak
Timur kita juga yang wajib diselidik.....



Cartoon in *Warta Jenaka*, September 7, 1936



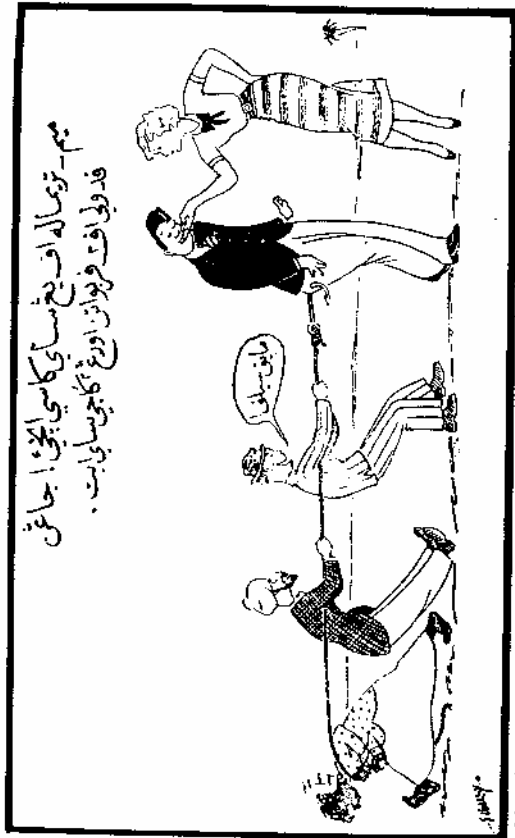
6 Januari 1938 m.s. 10 (WJ 16)

Majlis di Suap pasang bantui di luar duni adalah bodalan yang sengaja digambarkan untuk menggambarkan tipu helak yang digambarkan secara halus. Di dalam karikatur ini penulis S.B. Ally cuba membayangkan suatu keadaan yang lebih dasyak atau buruk bukannya di sini dengan duni relap dengan mata kai yang besar. Kita melihat deretan peredaran dan fasalan burai sehingga tidak sadar mata kai yang besar mencangkuk daging para kita.

Penulis yang mengambil toren mengenai karikatur ini menyeru pembaca pembaca supaya berlar dengan serios-naps cermat mengenai mesej yang mahu disampaikan itu.

24

An S.B. Ally cartoon in *Warta Jenaka*, January 6, 1938



6 Januari 1938 m.s. 10 (WJ 16)

Majlis di Suap pasang bantui di luar duni adalah bodalan yang sengaja digambarkan untuk menggambarkan tipu helak yang digambarkan secara halus. Di dalam karikatur ini penulis S.B. Ally cuba membayangkan suatu keadaan yang lebih dasyat atau buruk bukan dilihat dengan duni tetapi dengan mata kalai yang besar. Kita melihat deretan perantaraan dan fassan burai sehingga tidak sadar mata kalai yang besar mencangkuk daging para kita.

Penulis yang mengambil toren mengenai karikatur ini menyeru pembaca pembaca supaya berhadapan dengan senas-nasib cermai mengenai mesej yang mahu disampaikan itu.

24

An S.B. Ally cartoon in *Warta Jenaka*, January 6, 1938



انس کروٹوں ملایاں یونین اتولہ
دہر بکری فرسکوان تانہ سلاو

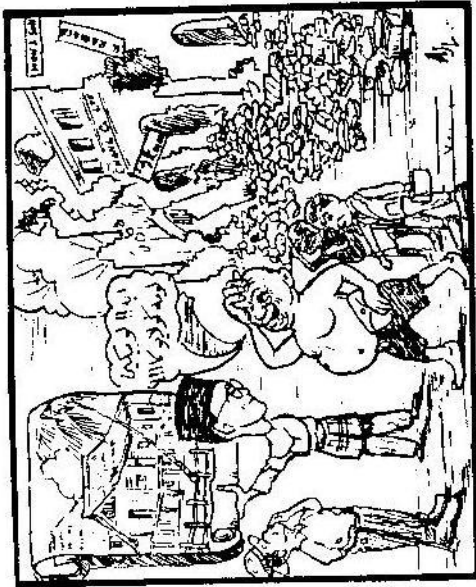
19 April 1947, m.s. 1 (M 3)

Malayan Union telah ditubuhkan pada 1 April 1946, walaupun
disebabkan oleh satu orang-orang Melayu. Penempatan yang
tidak puas-puas ini, telah memaksa pihak British mem-
bubarkan Malayan Union pada 1 Februari 1948 dan menubuh-
kan Persekutuan Tanah Melayu.

Karikatur ini cuba menggambarkan situasi Persekutuan Malayan
Union yang digantikan dengan Persekutuan Tanah Melayu.
Digambarkan rasa kekesalan kaum Cina terhadap Per-
sekutuan Tanah Melayu yang dinyatakan sebagai 'Rumah
Gulayu' (Rumah Melayu).

35

Political cartoon, April 19, 1947



انس کرومى ملان يونان ايتوله
دديونكن فرسكوان تانهلايو

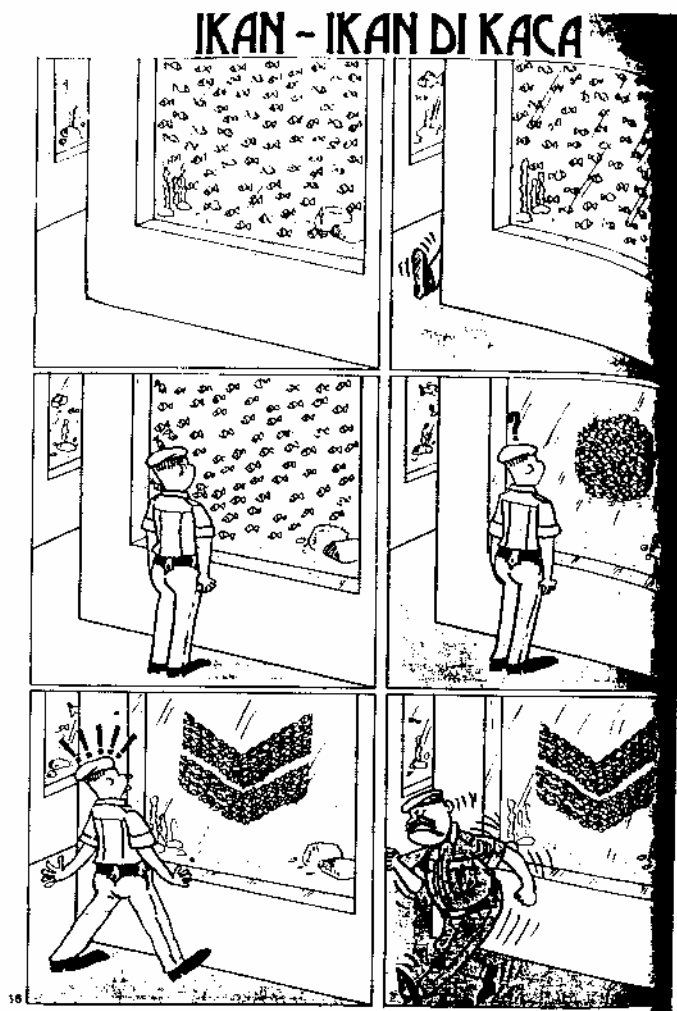
19 April 1947, m.s. 1 (M 3)

Malayan Union telah ditubuhkan pada 1 April 1946, walaupun diundang hanya oleh orang-orang Melayu. Penentang yang tidak putus-putus ini telah memaksa pihak British membatalkan Malayan Union pada 1 Februari 1948 dan menubuhkan Persekutuan Tanah Melayu.

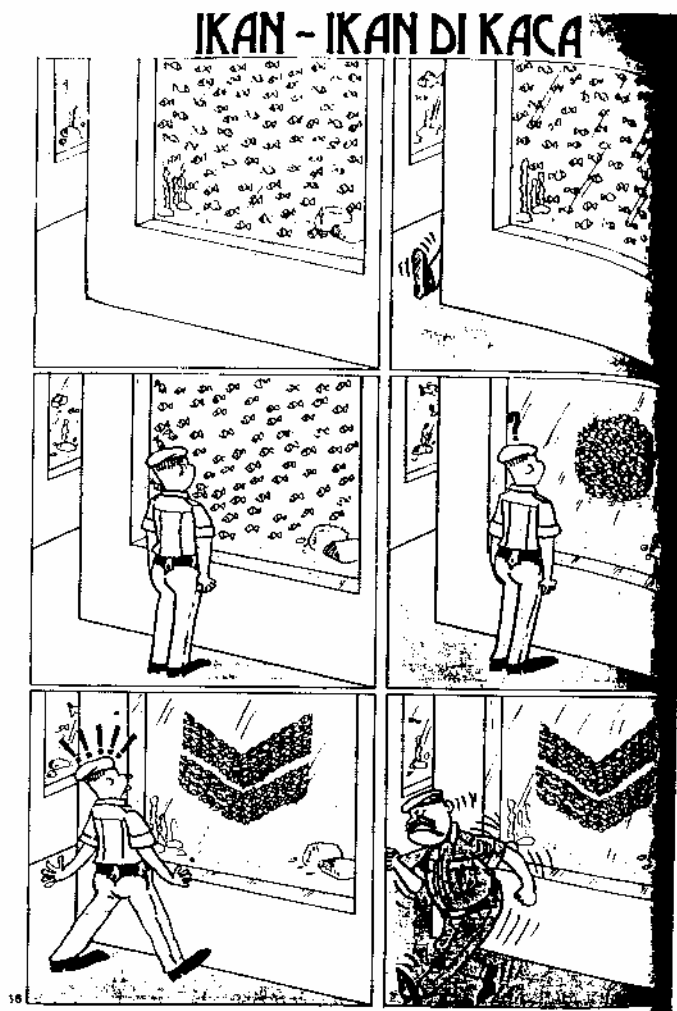
Karikatur ini cuba menggambarkan situasi Persekutuan Malayan Union yang digantikan dengan Persekutuan Tanah Melayu. Digambarkan juga kerusuhan kaum Cina terhadap Persekutuan Tanah Melayu yang dinyatakan sebagai 'umrah' Gulaju rumah Melayu.

35

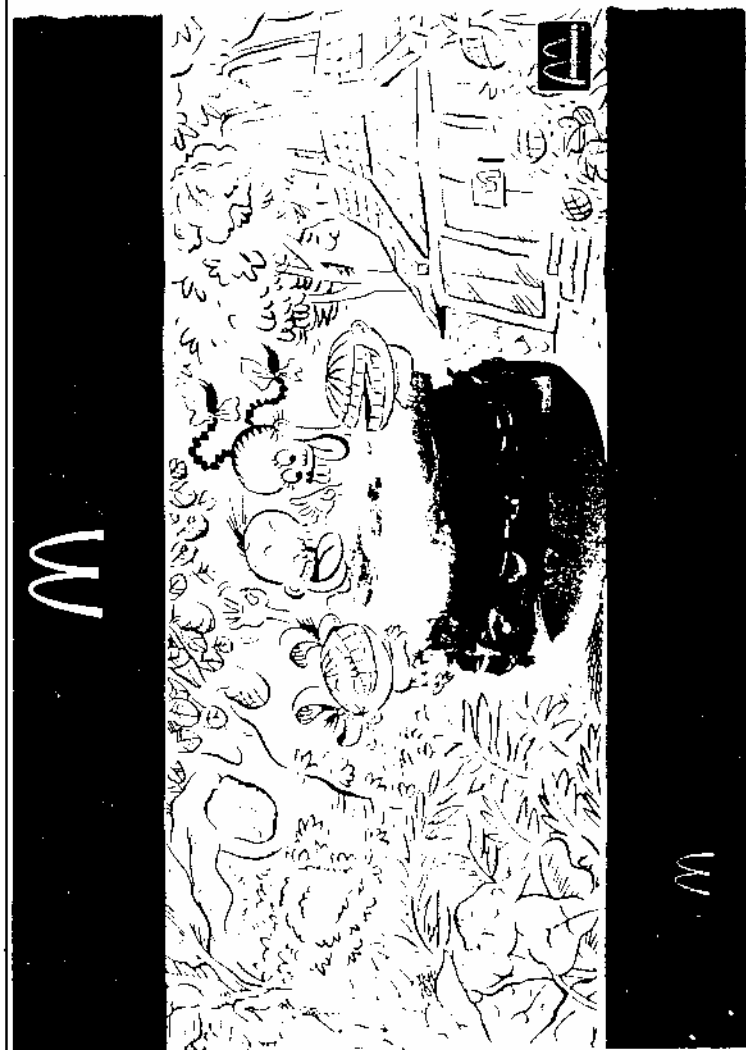
Political cartoon, April 19, 1947



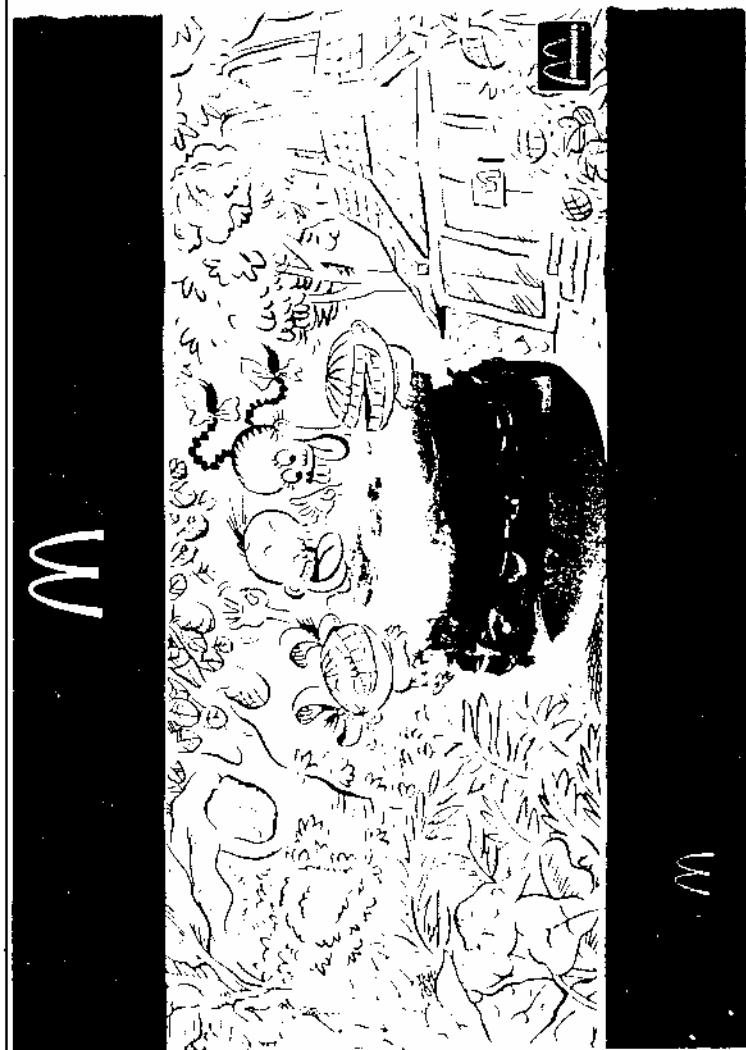
Rejab Had cartoon



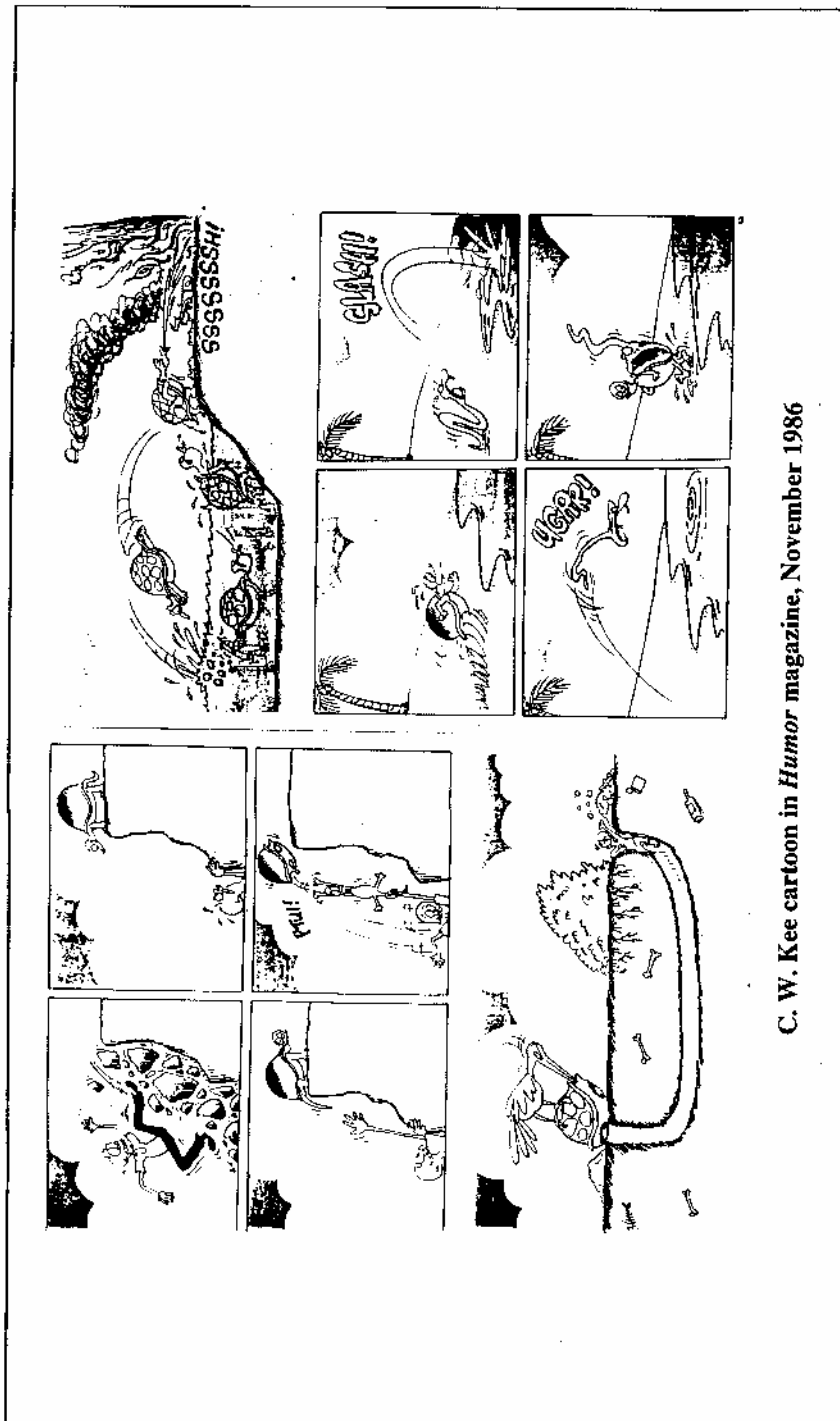
Rejab Had cartoon

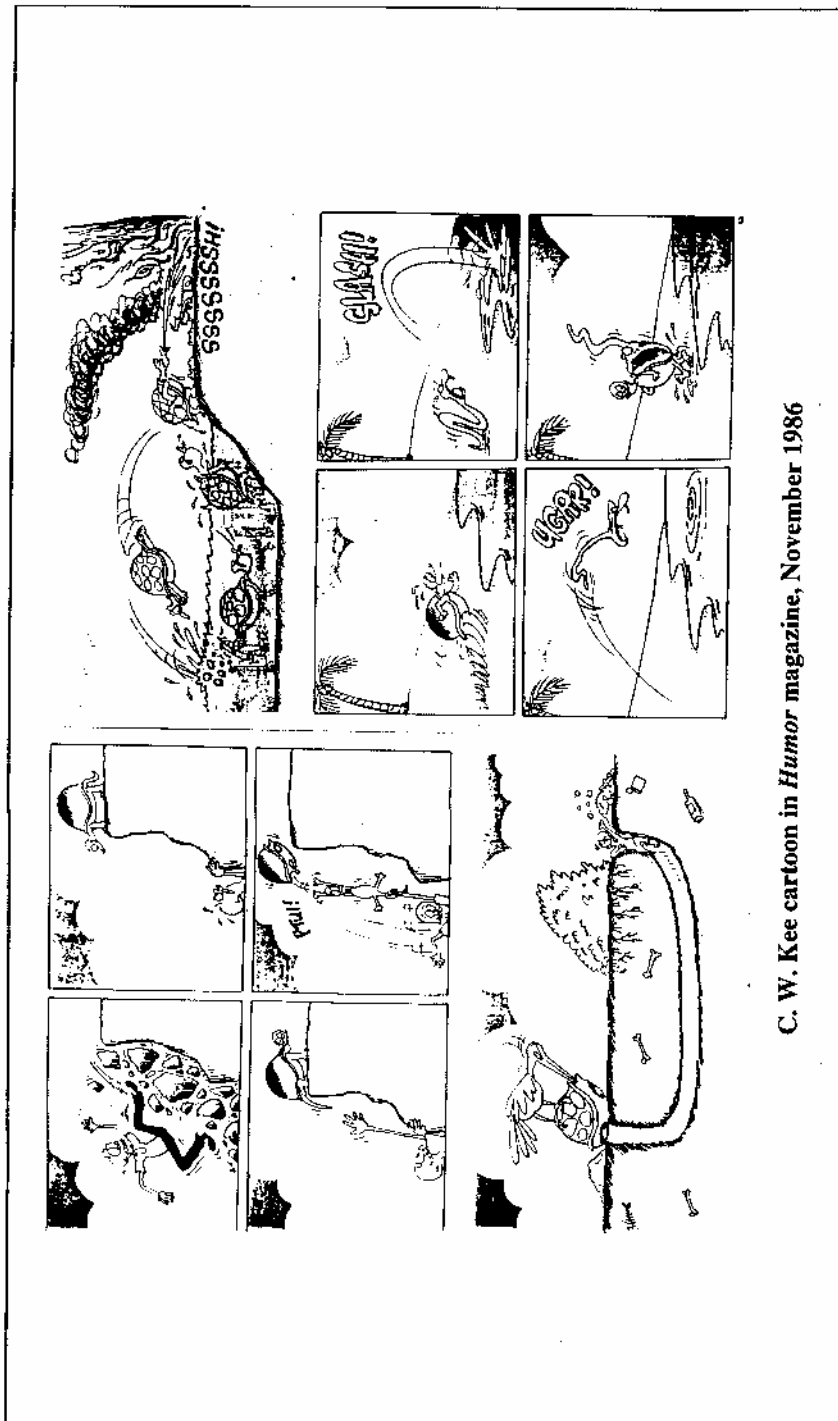


Advertisement for "Kampung Burger" by Lat



Advertisement for "Kampung Burger" by Lat

C. W. Kee cartoon in *Humor* magazine, November 1986

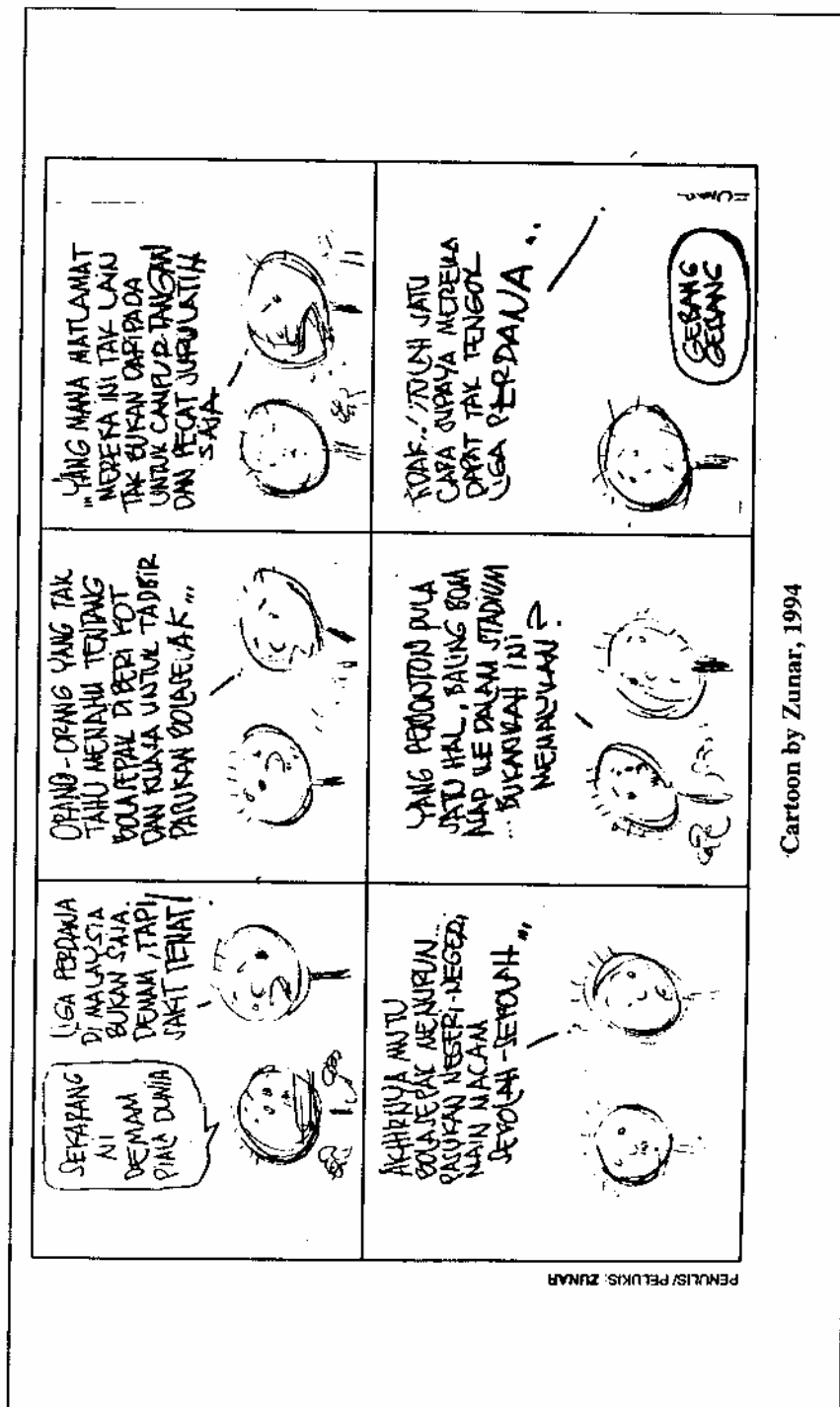
C. W. Kee cartoon in *Humor* magazine, November 1986

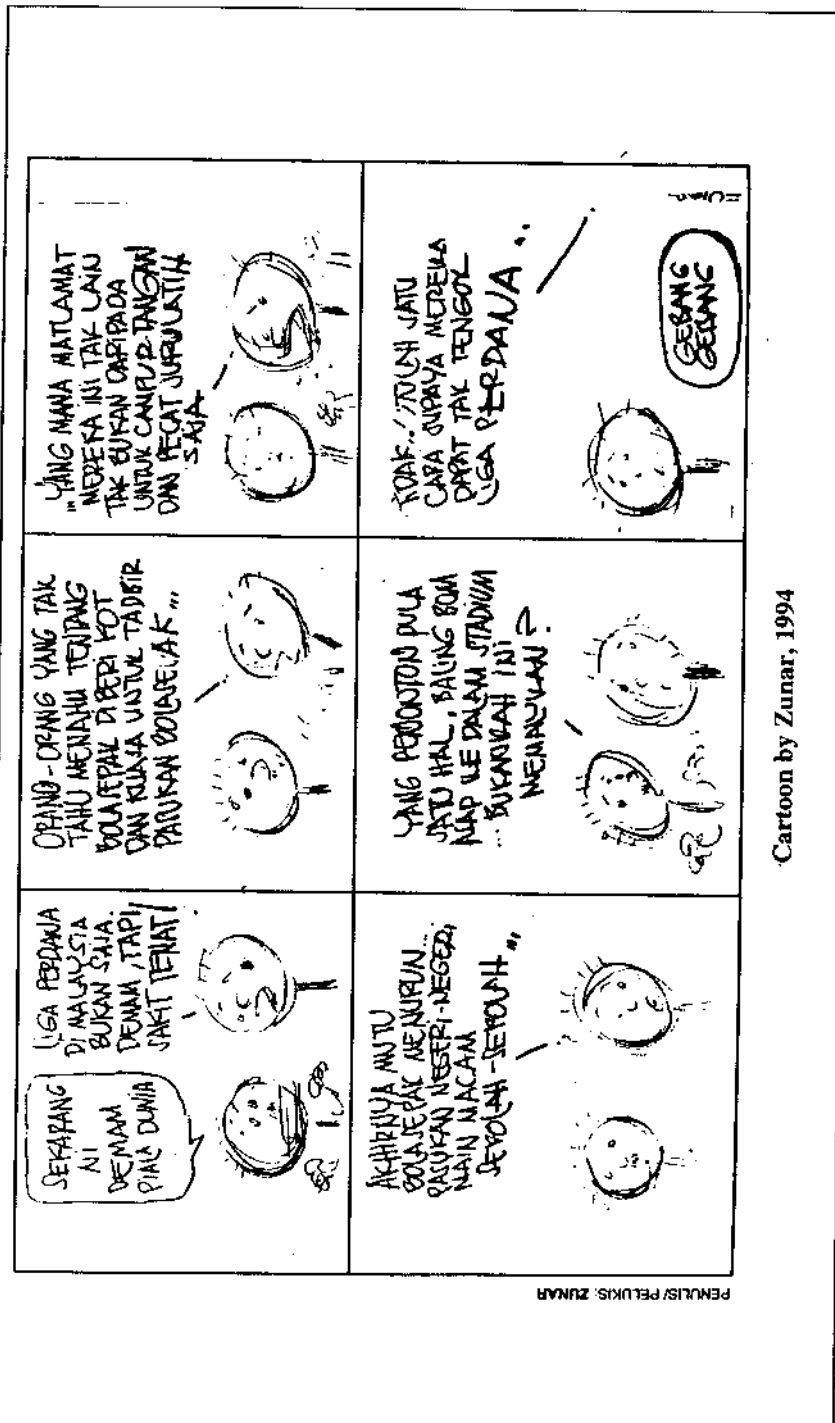


Cover of *Gila-Gila*, June 1994



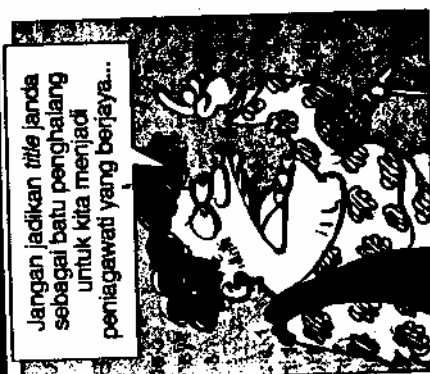
Cover of *Gila-Gila*, June 1994





Cartoon by Zunar, 1994

Dari Wanita Untuk Wanita



Cartoon by female artist, Cabai